

# A Brief Literature Review on ‘Comparative Analysis of Consumer Offers’

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**Abstract:** *This paper travels through the role of consumer offers in the dynamics of the modern market. Consumer is entitled as the ‘King of the Market’, vesting powers to influence businesses in making strategies comprehending their interest only. Based on existing literature, the change in consumer buying behavior and the factors leading to it has been identified. The study examines various promotional techniques – discounts, bonus packs, scarcity promotions, reward points, free delivery – that drives consumer buying behavior and promotes brand loyalty. A comparative analysis of all the above-mentioned promotional techniques has been done which helps in choosing the right one at the right time ensuring maximum returns. The effectiveness of these consumer offers and its impact on consumer behavior has been a prime focal point in the discussion. The consumer buying behavior has been characterized as occasion-based and offer-based, revealing that various psychological and emotional factors impact decision making. The findings suggest that the relationship between businesses and consumers is mutual; a quid pro quo is needed in order to make it work. As the marketplace is continuously evolving, identifying the right targeted audience and leveraging them in terms of required offers helps in promoting long-term loyalty and ensuring a successful business in a dynamic economic environment.*

**Keywords:** *Consumer offers, Comparison, Discounts, Bonus packs, Scarcity Promotion, Reward Points, Free Delivery, Sweepstakes, Rebates, Profit making, Online marketing, Offline marketing, Promotion tool, Increase in sales, monetary promotion, non-monetary promotion.*

## INTRODUCTION

Consumer, usually known as the “King of the Market”, but have you ever thought why? As a King has the right over his subjects the consumer has the right over products to be sold in the market. Product category, fit, fabric, size, design, colour, brand, price range, trend and so on is based only upon the King (Consumer) and his/her preferences. And the market

does not limit to any particular area but is rather limitless, borderless and even human-less at times, these days. As the subjects require a King, a market can only function with the presence of Consumers. Sellers offer several schemes, rebates and discounts in order to lure in more and more customers in order to ensure profitability and smooth functioning of their business.

The business operates on a solo motto of maximising profits by acquiring new customers or either retaining the older ones. But this motto is usually achieved using several strategies, policies and schemes. With the passage of time these trends witness a few changes. The changes that at times becomes necessary for the survival of the business. From bulk manufacturing to customisation, from one advertisement on Doordarshan to integrated marketing communication, from brand ambassadors to influencers, the business world has experienced a lot.

Consumer offers are the real game changers at any platform, be it online or offline. It aids sales by inspiring/ motivating or influencing individuals in order to purchase a particular product. These offers act as a catalyst. As catalysts speeds up a chemical reaction, the consumer offer promotes an individuals’ intention to purchase that particular product ultimately boosting up the sales. These short-term techniques help in stimulating sales by encouraging store traffic. It also develops a sense of brand loyalty among current customers.

The purchase can be categorised as either occasion biased or offer biased. Occasion bias is when there is some function or event and the purchase becomes mandatory; eg: Wedding shopping. Offer biased is when there are certain offers and discounts which are being offered by the seller and the buyers are

motivated to buy things at that price point; eg: End of reason sale at Myntra or No cooking week at Zomato.

The “purchase” decision is entirely dependent on consumer expectation. The expectations can be considered as psychological factors that influence the decision-making process. And the decision defines consumer behaviour. Hence, it can be deduced that the consumer expectations lead to consumer behaviour. The bigger question that lies here is how the consumer expectations are handled by the marketers. The expectations are based on need/want/ desire backed by market offerings. Latest fashion, seasonal collection, basics to luxury, price discounts, coupons, reward points, and so on comes under market offerings. Consumer behaviour is dynamic and it varies from individual to individual, from one group to another, from one market to another, from one season to another and even from one nation to another.

#### CHANGE IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In the light of consumer behaviours, Jacobs et al. (2002) intimated that the firms have been spending a lot of money on sales promotional activities globally with the only intent of influencing consumer behaviour. The offers affect the consumer behaviour directly and hence play a crucial role in determining it. Kotler & Keller (2016) has outlined these promotional tools and they are samples, rebates, price packs, premiums (gifts), frequency programs, cross-promotions, contests/sweepstakes/games, patronage awards, coupons, free trials, product warranties, tie-in promotions, and point-of-purchase display. These are used by firms to attract customers and to change their behaviours. Time and again it has been proven that consumer offers and consumer behaviour are interconnected and usually have a direct correlation. Consumer buying behaviour is a complex phenomenon. It is not an individual concept. It is based on many factors and underlying principles. Cultural, personal, social, and psychological factors influence an individuals’ behaviour. Earlier relatives, peers and endorsers used to influence a consumer’s behaviour and purchase decision but recent research discovered that attitude, emotions and situations are equally responsible factors (Olsen et al.,2007). The same can be witnessed in the form of Shopping Therapy, these days, where people shop in order to handle their emotions well. The process of consumer decision

making can be classified into three stages namely; the Input, the Process and the Output (Schiffman, 2005). The inputs are physical, psychological, and behavioural factors. The process starts with need identification and ends with the final purchase decision and the output is the enforcement of that decision.

In order to achieve the sole motive of any business unit, in a short time, sales promotion techniques are used. These instruments help in increasing sales of products and brands (Wierenga & Soethoudt, 2010). These techniques create an illusion of benefit in the mind of consumers (Yusuf, 2010). As discussed earlier, there are different types of sales promotion tools. These tools can be divided into two groups, viz a viz, monetary promotions and non- monetary promotions. There are different studies done that support this classification. [Campbell and Diamond (1990), D’Astous and Landreville (2003) and Alvarez and Casielles (2005)]. The other names given to this classification are Price Promotion (discounts, coupons, rebates) and not geared to price promotion (free samples, gifts, sweepstakes).

Promotion tools that generate excitement and interest stimulate sales, and increase profits is simply what marketers’ need. And for consumers, who buy the company's product, these tools offer a reward, for example a discount, gift, or extra product. These promotions benefit the consumers to a very wide extent but a sense of uncertainty is attached to them in order to bring in the thrill. Contests and sweepstakes are caused by consumer’s skills or pure luck. Also at times, marketers express thereward level as tensile, like, 20% – 50% off this week. Occurrence of an external event creates that uncertainty or probability that whether the benefit will be received or not, for example, gets additional 5% off if India becomes the World Champions (Kusum L. Ailawadi et al, 2015). All these sales promotion techniques create a small yet significant hike in the sales graph.

The sales promotion offers are usually resulting in bulk purchases by consumers as well as impulse buying. Consumers weigh between their need and the discount offered on the product. The discount on the product brings impulsivity in nature and results in the purchase of a product by a consumer. (Rook 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982;

Youn, 2000). Buying something immediately off the rack gives you an emotional pleasure which at times becomes a more crucial factor than the need. Offer creates time and quantity scarcity. Limited time and limited quantity create a hedonic effect and compels an individual to purchase the product. The Purchased product is not the result of any need but the result of a perceived arousal that a consumer experiences due to these offers. (Yi Wu a, Liwei Xin a, Dahui Li b, Jie Yu c, Junpeng Guo a, 2021).

Let's review some of the consumer offers-

Discounts:

Discounts are a key driver of consumer purchasing decisions, in online as well as offline retail environments. They are an essential component of consumer sales promotions, offering a direct incentive for consumers to buy products they may not have otherwise considered. By lowering the perceived cost of a product, discounts can trigger a sense of urgency or excitement, motivating consumers to take advantage of the temporary price reduction. According to Kotler (2009) price discounts can be presented as savings, which is offered to consumers from the normal price of a product, which is listed on the label or product packaging. At most malls or supermarkets, there are usually two prices mentioned, the maximum retail price and the maximum selling price (which is the discounted price). Belch & Belch (2011) explained that the price discounts can trigger consumers to buy in large quantities, anticipate the promotion of competitors, and support trade in larger quantities. Discounts can be considered as the oldest tool of sales promotion. In order to tweak sales or eliminate competition the best bid a salesperson can do is to quote the best price for the customer, a price to which a consumer cannot say no. The discount is a popular price because it directly stimulates the purchase of the product being promoted, resulting in an increase in sales (Gendall et al, in Asterrina et al 2011).

In earlier days, to increase the flow of cash in the business a trade discount was also offered along with a cash discount. Even in recent times, shopping applications emphasize more on the amount saved rather than the amount to be paid as discounts result in total savings and it becomes an important factor while buying products online. Few shopping applications also have a feature of sharing the lowest price in the

last 7 days or 10 days, which makes consumers, think that it is the maximum discount that the brand is offering which results in an instant purchase of that product.

Bonus Packs:

A bonus pack by definition is an additional number of items that are placed in a special pack size as a "bonus". Based on the defined goals, these bonus packs can make the deal even more attractive and can help meet the set goals easily. e.g. 500 ml of free washing liquid with 2 litre packs. Messages on goods such as Family size and Buy 2 Get 1 free are a part of a bonus pack promotional tool. Some additional information on nutritional value and the products' cost effectiveness assists in conveying consumers that the deal is a value for money. Minimal price, maximum benefits is what every consumer is in search of. (Youngjun Kim, Youngju Kim, Hye-Jin Kim; 2024). It is basically how well a product is branded in order to highlight the perceived benefits that a consumer enjoys while using that product. Bonus packs that offer greater product volume are preferred by consumers over price discounts that offer lower prices (Diamond & Sanyal, 1990). This is because according to prospect theory's value function (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), bonus packs tend to be perceived as pure gains while price discounts tend to be perceived as reductions in losses. A bonus pack provides an opportunity to increase the product benefit and consists of the quality of gain, aligning with a promotion orientation to maximize gains. Individuals with a promotion orientation are expected to experience a regulatory fit between their motivational orientation and a bonus pack, resulting in a preference for a bonus pack over a price discount (Jun Yao, Di Wang, Brett A. S. Martin; 2024).

Scarcity Promotion:

Marketers frequently use scarcity promotions, where a product or event is limited in availability (Kirk Kristofferson, Brent McFerran, Andrea C Morales, Darren W Dahl; 2016). The tool is based on a simple rule called 'FOMO' (Fear of Missing Out). This fear leads to haste decision of buying a product or attending a concert, so that you are not the only one left. A "scarcity promotion" is defined as a marketing tactic that emphasizes limited availability (either in quantity or time) of a specific product or event (Hsuan-Hsuan

Ku, Chien-Chih Kuo, Tzu-Wei Kuo; 2012). The online consumers often fall for these promotional messages and take spontaneous decisions of buying something, so that they don't miss out on that product or event. Online marketers use tools like price promotion, advertisement of limited offer, and attractive product appearance. Both online and offline markets excessively use both scarcity promotion strategies of limited-quantity and limited-time (Yi Wu, Liwei Xin, Dahui Li, Jie Yu, Junpeng Guo; 2020). Scarcity promotion creates a feeling of not losing the limited-quantity products to others. It brings in a sense of competition among consumers and they are in the race to obtain the product, experience the physiological change, which at times makes them aggressive. The use of product scarcity in order to enhance a product's market performance was highly tested and recommended by both academicians and practitioners (Xiaohui Shi, Feng Li, Pattarin Chumnumpan; 2020). The purchase intention increases as soon as one receives the signal that the product is potentially or currently unavailable. The desire to own that product increases. (Belinda Barton, Natalina Zlatevska, Harmen Oppewal; 2022). Scarcity can build a sense of urgency and tension among users and result in more purchases and shorter searches. A few scholars have demonstrated the impact of scarcity on consumers' impulse purchasing and suggest that time scarcity may reduce consumers' possibility to make an accurate and objective judgment. (Yuanyuan Guo, Xiaoting Chen, Chaoyou Wang; 2023)

#### Reward Points:

The reward points program (i.e. the consumers receive and accumulate points based on their purchases and then redeem the earned points for rewards) nowadays becomes increasingly popular in the retail industry. Various retailers use reward points programs to sell their products. The offered reward points create a favourable attitude towards a particular retailer and thus motivate consumers to buy from this retailer and also forces them to be consistent. It helps in developing a sense of brand loyalty. In order to attract and stimulate consumers to buy, one must have a well-chalked-out reward points program. (Ruiliang Yan, Zhi Pei, Sanjoy Ghose; 2019). Despite criticisms regarding their effectiveness, reward programs today represent a prevalent and apparently successful form of marketing investment for several industries such as

airlines, hotels, gas stations, and credit cards. (Federico Rossi; 2017). Reward redemption may have an important impact on members' behaviour, particularly on purchase behaviour just before and after redeeming a reward. (Matilda Dorotic, Peter C. Verhoef, Dennis Fok, Tammo H.A. Bijmolt; 2014). Having to reach a pre-specified threshold on time to obtain a reward motivates members to increase their expenditures—an effect known as points pressure. (Gail Ayala Taylor, Scott A. Neslin; 2005). Loyalty programs offer rewards via mediums of different magnitudes (e.g., “\$6 off when you accumulate 1,000 [100] points. Earn 10 [1] points/dollar”). The program medium presents two key pieces of information: reward distance (points required to redeem reward) and step size (points earned per dollar). (Rajesh Bagchi, XingboLi; 2010). In order to attract and enhance users' commitment to participate in online open innovation communities, it is important to know what types of motivators are important for the members. Both monetary and non-monetary rewards can be used for motivating participation. (Maria J. Antikainen, Heli K. Vaataja; 2010) Key aspects of the schemes are the means and processes whereby rewards, points or credits can be earned, and the options or deals through which points can be spent. (Rowley, Jennifer; 2004) In the studied communities, the web survey respondents found monetary rewarding important, as well as non-monetary rewarding based on the quality of ideas. (Maria J. Antikainen, Heli K. Vaataja; 2010)

#### Free Delivery:

Free shipping promotions have become popular among online retailers. (Edlira Shehu, Dominik Papies, and Scott A. Neslin; 2020). They simply are relying on this tool in order to retain an existing base of consumers at times. More and more online retailers now offer free delivery for orders exceeding a minimum purchase quantity—in effect, a threshold free shipping (TFS) policy. The threshold is a minimum amount that can be obtained easily but with this free delivery feature people consider it as a breakeven point and order goods and services accordingly. While TFS has become so prevalent in e-tailing, there is still not much known about the factors that may influence the consumers' intentions to pay for delivery when they purchase less than the specified quantity (Wen- Hsien Huang, George C. Shen, Che-

Ling Liang; 2019). The cost of the product may be higher but paying extra charges of delivery is against the rules of the online buyers mostly. Free shipping has a greater impact on buyers than price discount (Guowei Hua, Shouyang Wang, T.C.E. Cheng; 2012). A survey finds that shipping and handling costs triggers 52% of the abandonment of online shopping carts (Knowledge @ Wharton, 2008). Free delivery aids random purchase of a few unnecessary products as well. The products that are not immediately needed but one might need them someday. To reduce the negative impact of the shipping fees, online retailers have been implementing a variety of shipping-related promotions, which can be divided into the following three categories: (i) unconditional free shipping (UFS) policy, under which an online retailer absorbs the shipping costs for all orders; (ii) contingent free shipping (CFS) policy, under which a retailer pays for the shipping costs but only for those orders equal to or larger than a predefined cutoff level; and (iii) consumers absorb the shipping costs by paying the fees that are increasing in their order sizes (Rafael Becerril- Arreola, Mingming Leng, Mahmut Parlar; 2013). Free shipping promotions increase net sales volume, but higher product returns and lost shipping revenue render these promotions unprofitable. (Edlira Shehu, Dominik Papies, and Scott A. Neslin; 2020).

**Sweepstakes:**

A giveaway is something where only one or few lucky winners are selected from a group of entries. The chance of winning a prize motivates an individual to participate in sweepstakes. It creates a buzz in the town and hence results in customer engagement. A sense of excitement for a new product is usually created by sweepstakes. Tata Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 giving away a new Tata Curvv Car, if fans answer a few simple questions, is one of the best and recent examples of sweepstakes as a promotional tool. Even in social media marketing, sweepstakes have been able to gain customer attention. (Woo Jin Jung, Seungjun Yang, Hee Woong Kim; 2020). The winner is usually randomly drawn. These contests give you a fair chance in trying out your luck. Sweepstakes being a non-monetary promotional tool leads to an easier customer engagement. (Tsan Abrahamson; 2015). Sweepstakes are more popular in franchise models and if used correctly they generate brand awareness, consumer interest, and most importantly, revenue. But, if you

miss the shot, it can lead to some serious repercussions like negative publicity, civil and criminal liabilities. (Tywanda H. Lord & Laura C. Miller; 2010)

**Rebates:**

Rebates are those financial incentives that ensure future loyalty of a customer. A monetary benefit, a partial refund or a return of a part of the total payment that buyers receive may be not immediately but eventually. This simply encourages them to buy more again and again. It ensures a comeback of the customers. Rebates are not those pressure points that encourage an individual to buy something impulsively but a future loyalty can be expected due to this. This sales promotion tool is a clear form of incentive or motivation for consumers to buy something again. A post-purchase action is often required to use these. It is usually used to inspire up-sales.

The Table shows the Comparison of above discussed consumer offers with different columns detailing the offer, description, impact on consumer behaviour, pros and cons of different offers.

Promotion Type	Description	Impact on Consumer Behaviour	Pros	Cons
<b>Discounts</b>	Temporary reduction in product price. Typically used in sales and special offers.	Creates urgency and excitement. Encourages bulk buying and impulsive purchases.	Immediate savings are clear to consumers. Directly stimulates purchase.	May reduce perceived value of the brand. Over-reliance can erode long-term profitability.
<b>Bonus Packs</b>	Extra products included in a package for the same price (e.g., "Buy one, get one free").	Perceived as greater value. Encourages more purchases and aligns with gain-oriented goals.	Consumers feel they are getting more for their money. Enhances value perception.	May lead to overstocking or unnecessary purchases, especially if consumers don't need extra products.
<b>Scarcity Promotions</b>	Limited availability of a product or time-limited offers (e.g., "Only 3 items left!").	Triggers fear of missing out (FOMO). Leads to urgency and impulsive decisions.	Can significantly boost short-term sales.	May backfire if consumers feel manipulated or if scarcity is fake, causing distrust.
<b>Reward Points</b>	Receive points on purchase and later redeem them to get extra benefit.	Favourable attitude towards a seller or a brand	Develops consistency and loyalty.	May not be that committed to earn or enjoy points which benefit them on a later stage.
<b>Free Delivery</b>	Free shipping on purchases, often above a minimum threshold.	Reduces shopping cost perception. Increases average order value as customers aim to qualify for free delivery.	Very popular among online shoppers. Strong incentive to increase order size.	Can lead to unprofitable sales or higher returns if shipping costs are absorbed by the company.
<b>Sweepstakes</b>	Free gifts are offered to few lucky winners.	Creates consumer engagement	Beneficial for a product launch and instant market capture	Can create a negative buzz in the market
<b>Coupons / Rebates</b>	Discounts via codes or cash-back offers, often requiring post-purchase action.	Encourages buying for coupon benefit. Rebates create delayed gratification, possibly enhancing future loyalty.	Clear incentive to buy. Easily trackable.	Rebates can feel inconvenient, leading to low redemption rates.

Table: Comparison of Consumer Offers

## CONCLUSION

Today, the marketplace has become very dynamic with the consumer being its undisputed king, who has the power to influence offerings and compel businesses to plan strategies in his/her favour only. The growth of any business is defined by its sales and in this competitive environment, sales promotional offerings (consumer offers) is the only resort keeping their business alive. Inviting consumers to buy your product in their need is one thing but creating urgency and at times excitement around product can only be done using these promotional strategies. The paper discusses various promotional offers from discounts to bonus packs and reward points to free delivery showing how they motivate consumers to purchase and repurchase same product stimulating a sense of brand loyalty as well as leading to bulk purchases at times. Consumer offers create buzz in the market which helps in acquiring new customers by increasing brand visibility. The relationship between consumers and market is mutual: consumers demand quality and value for money; businesses must respond with innovations and appealing offers. The availability of substantial studies in this domain are carefully listed and discussed. The survival of any business in the market is based on a single thumb- rule of acquiring new customers and retaining older ones. By using right promotional techniques, achieving this goal is simply, a cakewalk. Consumer offers ensure success by enhancing consumer engagement, driving sales and developing a sense of loyalty. The paper also indicates a gap in tracking the reasons of online purchase which can be taken up as further study in this expanding domain of online marketing.

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